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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 001088

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2013

TAGS: ECON ELAB KDEM NI PGOV

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: OIL WORKERS THREATEN STRIKE IN RESPONSE
TO ALLEGED TRANSOCEAN DISMISSALS

¶1. Peter Akpatason, president of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers of Nigeria (NUPENG), has threatened to call "a national strike wherein the entire oil industry will be shut down" unless Houston-based Transocean Inc. rescinds the dismissal of 116 Nigerian workers who participated in a wildcat protest aboard several offshore rigs in April. The protesters held hundreds of Transocean employees hostage, including twenty-one Americans, during the two-week standoff.

¶2. In addition to the layoffs, Akpatason accused Transocean of discrimination, citing the company's use of helicopters to carry expatriates to oil rigs while transporting Nigerian workers in poorly maintained boats. He said NUPENG is "ready to face the consequences" as the union prepares to disrupt the producing, servicing, refinery, distribution, and upstream sectors.

¶3. Joseph Akinlaja, General Secretary of NUPENG, told Laboff that he has been involved in private discussions with the Port Harcourt zone of NUPENG regarding the potential strike. However, he was surprised to learn that Akpatason had already issued a public statement without first consulting him. Akinlaja expressed concern that Akpatason made the remarks out of anger, adding that a strike action cannot take effect until the National Executive Council of NUPENG endorses it.

¶4. Akinlaja and Akpatason departed Lagos for Memphis, Tennessee on May 17 for a two-week workshop for union leaders. Akinlaja said a NUPENG strike action in their absence is highly unlikely.

HINSON-JONES